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ABSTRACT

An eduator's self-analysis of changing beliefs about classroom relationships over the last 20 years are presented in this paper, with attention given to the philosophical and political issues of caring and controlling. Three phases of experience--student teaching, graduate school, and university teaching--are highlighted. The educator's approaches to teacher-student interaction moved from caring for students to leadership and student management to development of a social compact. A conclusion is that classroom authority does not involve management and control but is rather a social compact underwritten by the actions of caring and controlling. The social compact attempts to balance ongoing negotiation with legitimate authority, and can result in enhanced classroom solidarity and greater student responsibility. Teachers should seek ways of caring for students while understanding power and control. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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LOOKING BACK AT MYSELF:
A SOLILOQUY ABOUT CARING AND CONTROLLING

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INTRODUCTION

This paper represents a self-analysis of my thinking about classroom relationships over the last twenty years. The intent is two-fold: (1) to portray one person's changing beliefs, and (2) to propose that the patterns sketched in the portrayal might engender discussion about philosophical and political issues of caring and controlling. I will describe my thoughts in three phases. These should not be taken as some sort of underexamined stage theory; I make no claims about the universality of my experiences. But it is true that many of the preservice education students and new teachers with whom I work face the sorts of problems and teach from the sorts of perspectives that will be described.

The three phases of my experiences that will be summarized occured during student teaching, graduate school, and university teaching. As a student teacher, I was initially concerned with caring for students, in personal and curricular terms. Then as a beginning graduate student I became curious about the research literature on classroom management and put together mini-workshops and classroom presentations on what "the research could tell us." Finally, I am now teaching at a university and am taking the chance to re-examine what caring and controlling mean to me, and how legitimate

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authority might be re-conceptualized. Within each summary of the first two phases, I will splice my self-critical comments (in *italics*) so the reader can hear my present voice reflecting on past perspectives. The commentary constitutes a kind of historical self-critique.

CARING FOR STUDENTS

The first phase of my pedagogical education about authority and control occured during student teaching. (Of course, in my first twenty-three years of life I learned a great deal about control, but the focus here is on my teaching experiences). I taught for one complete semester, with full classroom responsibilities the entire time and little contact with the university, so my experiences were akin to a new teacher's. The notes from my red student teaching journal, now dog-eared after nearly two decades, tell the story of someone centered on caring and uninterested in overt controlling.

> Felt a bit unorganized but quite at ease. Students very reserved, no questions, but I thought most of them were with me. Wanted to find a way to get more involved with them emotionally on their first day... A few snappy talkers and general wise-acres; I let them say a few of their jokes and we got along well. The boys and girls were totally separated; I'll have to work on changing that by at least discussing male and female roles. This should be a lively class. They look me in the eye. (August 27, 1973).

(Notice the emphasis on getting "emotionally" involved (and the cultural assumptions about the value of eye contact). I thought in dramatic terms.)

> People seemed distant at the start... I'm gonna come to love a lot of these people (August 29, 1973).

(It seemed clear to me then that worthwhile content and humane intentions would suffice. The students were beginning to stir a bit more.)

> First hour was a madhouse, as I hadn't gotten all the papers together and took far too long looking over the test (which should have been done the day after it was given!). More organized second hour, broke the class into 2 islands, one in a cold climate and one in a warm climate; some worked alone and some in groups... They were beautiful, relaxed and talking animatedly with each other. I have spent much

> time alone with students tutoring or just joking around, which seems so important for us to know and trust each other (September 27, 1973).

(Questions of caring and controlling began to force their way into my consciousness because I was learning that control was more complex and emotional than I had thought.)

> Really got ANGRY! Today no-one would start any action, so I said YOU ARE SUCKERS, HITLER COULD TAKE YOU OVER, I COULD TAKE YOU OVER LIKE I DO ALL THE TIME, ARE YOU ALL JUST GOING TO LIE ON YOUR BACKS AND LET ME WALK ON YOU? CAN'T YOU SPEAK YOUR MINDS? (After they had whiled away the whole hour, fooling around in their groups and sitting passively when I made suggestions, which I shouldn't have done in the first place.) Should I have directed this from the start? Afterward, Gina came up and asked how I could tell them they're lying on their backs when I allow Sue and Steph to walk all over me in class, talking and disturbing others. I thought for a minute, and Gina's right, I have glossed over their rudeness and their imperiousness because they are lively and they like me -- I'll never, thank god, be an iron fist, but I should practice justice in the class, and I should closely examine my relationships with students to make sure I uphold my ideals constantly (October 24, 1973).

(Almost everything was seen in a personal light, and classroom authority was predicated on how I related to students as a knowledgeable person. The positive side of this is that I had serious ideals about justice and student empowerment that I was unwilling to set aside.)

> All this grading crap! Why should I be the sole judge of some stupid grade? Why shouldn't we leave time for detailed evaluation of the student's work in conjunction with the student? (November 9, 1973).

(The negative aspect is that I had no well-developed plan for enabling students to work together, and I was invariably disappointed whenever students did not voluntarily jump into the activities.)

> I never developed a systematic approach to reaching out (and sometimes tracking down) students on the edge of my class. Should I have written letters to parents, visited the students at home and talked to the parents? How about contracts with slipping students? (January 10, 1974).

Though I taught full-time for seven years after this introductory teaching experience, the focus on caring and personal authority carried on. I always felt the tensions between caring for students (by getting to know them outside of class or enacting high expectations for all students' learning) and controlling (by setting out punishments).

READING THE LITERATURE

As a classroom teacher I did not care a whit about research or knowledge in a college of education. What I learned came from other teachers and books about education which described schools (The Lives of Children, by George Dennison) or which purported to show a better way to teach and learn Teacher, by Sylvia Ashton-Warner). When I decided to attend graduate school in education after being out of teaching for five years, the word "literature" assumed a new meaning. Now there were whole books on how one was supposed to "manage" students; I read many of them. I wanted to know what I might have missed out on, what might help new teachers as they struggled with the tensions of teaching. Partly because of my varied teaching background (teaching at four grade levels) I was asked to do several workshops and to be an Instructor for middle grades and Social Studies courses. To give a feel for my thinking at that point, what follows are some quotes from the outline for a classroom management workshop I led in 1987. Again I will comment after some of the quotes.

> General Objectives:
>
> (1) To develop an awareness that "discipline" is a social construct, vulnerable to interpretation and re-definition.
>
> (2) To recognize the constraints on teacher control of classrooms, as well as the power teachers possess to constrain or alter student behavior.
>
> (3) To recognize that teachers differentially define the meaning of behavior, which then affects how teachers deal with students.
>
> (4) To consciously and reflectively consider how best to respond to various sorts of behavior.
>
> (5) To understand how classroom activities relate to discipline.

(The statements seem worthy of consideration. At least I understood the social construction of ideas such as "discipline" and "appropriate behavior." Power was conceived as something to possess, a different

conception than I now hold, and there was no talk of students' power or resistance to school. A rational, localized approach to management.)

I. What affects our interactions with students?

Matters outside our direct control
School rules, unplanned interruptions, aspects of the building's physical environment, mandated texts, composition of student body, forms of student evaluation, students' home life, and the community profile

Matters somewhat within our control
Your teaching methods, the organization of classroom materials and furniture, certain classroom rules and procedures, your response to student behavior, and what it is that students are learning at any given point in a lesson

(I like my emphasis on the limits of controlling, and the implied criticism of the "transmission model of learning.")

II. How do we respond to students?

Recognition of our LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT roles
"Management" is a position of authority and responsibility. A manager plans, organizes, staffs, directs, and controls. In class the teacher as a manager takes care of the physical environment, utilizes rules and procedures effectively, and makes good use of class time.

"Leadership" centes around goal-setting. Leaders are interested in ideas and their practical applications. They are dreamers who communicate a vision to people. In class, they set goals and relate them to students. Leaders participate in school decisions and community activities.

A management objective is to maintain a disciplined, orderly environment where learning can take place. A leadership objective is to help students understand their own responses, so that they can be self-disciplined and take responsibility for their actions.

(Where are the students in all of this? And where are more broad-based notions of caring? The manager sounded like a prototypical middle-level executive, while the leader was focused on students' responsibilities but had no plan for student leadership.)

Defining student behavior as appropriate or inappropriate
Inappropriate behavior: rudeness toward the teacher, fighting, cheating, disobedience, stealing, failure to do work assigned, note-passing, profanity, tardiness, talking too much, not listening.

Is "inappropriate" behavior wrong? How does it hinder learning? Will we label it differently in different settings?

What constitutes "appropriate behavior"? How do we determine one from the other?

(Seems to me these are useful questions, and I like the focus on the contextuality of teachers' conceptions of students. But there was apparently no attempt to draw out the cultural and institutional implications of how we define behavior as acceptable or unacceptable.)

III. How do we establish a positive learning environment?

Physical/social/personal environment
There is an atmosphere of mutual respect; two-way communication is encouraged; the teacher is a model of discipline; the teacher uses group work to enhance student peer relationships.

Rules/procedures
Rules for administration of class; for verbal behavior; for student movement.
When should students talk in class? For what purposes should students be able to leave their seats? What role should students play in setting rules and procedures?

(Throughout this whole section there was an emphasis on modeling and on having good reasons for making rules. This is a sensible approach. Following this was a lengthy reading about various models of classroom management -- Assertive Discipline, Logical Consequences, Reality Therapy, Behavior Modification, Teacher Effectiveness Training, etc. The theories or programs were presented as neutrally as possible, in order to allow the students a chance to make up their own minds about the best approach for them. A menu of management strategies. Does this approach really help students to sort out the complexities of classrooms, or does it serve to confuse them so that it becomes easier to rely on one unexamined model at some later date?)

Giddens, Apple, Popkewitz, Spring, and other sociologists or historians, I was compelled to consider ideas about the political and institutional nature of control in the last two centuries. At the same time I have tried to consider the relationship between caring and controlling by reading Noddings and other writers on the topic of caring, and by doing two research projects related to this issue. I have become interested in the contexts of control and in the possibilities of negotiation, which I see as a primary component of caring and a means of gaining solidarity in classrooms. First, it is essential to analyze the assumptions and the practices of the prevailing approaches to classroom management. Then I will offer my emerging thoughts about negotiation along with the idea of examining classroom relationships through the metaphor of a "social compact."

There have been a multitude of approaches to establishing classroom authority. Curwin & Mendler (1988) have described two general "models" of discipline, the obedience model and the responsibility model (pp. 20-27). I think of them not as models, which conjures up a unified front that does not exist, but as "perspectives" that represent differing purposes and actions. In another paper (McLaughlin, 1992) I have critiqued the obedience and responsibility perspectives, and offered the idea of a solidarity perspective as a way to examine the workings of negotiation in classrooms. I will briefly clarify my stand here.

The title of this section is "questioning the premises" because that is the jist of what I have recently done. Classroom management as an idea covers a lot of territory (Charles, 1989; Doyle, 1986; Duke & Meckel, 1984; and Emmer, Evertson, Sanford, Clements, & Worsham, 1989, offer extended explanations of approaches to classroom management). There is a broader definition that may entail organizing (keeping track of one's materials, establishing seating charts, and maintaining an accurate and up-to-date grading system), planning (utilizing a variety of instructional techniques), knowing students, evaluating oneself, and maintaining a positive attitude (Reed, 1991, includes these parameters). But a significant segment of the education literature has described management in terms of overtly controlling students' behavior. This obedience perspective of classroom management embodies some assumptions about control that need to be challenged. There are six assumptions that merit scrutiny:

* that control is a classroom matter;

* that there exists a consensus about the aims of control, so we ought to concentrate on the means of control;

* that control is non-negotiated because power is assumed by one's position and not conferred by students;

* that control depends on teacher behaviors and on rewards and consequences;

* that control is extra-curricular, and classroom management is different than instruction;

* that problems reside in the student, and ought to be resolved through encounters with a student or a family (McLaughlin, 1992, pp. 12-15).

My analysis does not refer to all programs or even to any program in its entirety. But the taken-for-granted notions can be located in various writings about behavior or classroom management. I believe that a search for ways to enact legitimate authority require one to challenge the aforementioned assumptions, and the programs or approaches that represent those assumptions.

The responsibility perspective has offered a challenge to more obedience-oriented approaches. The promises and problems associated with the responsibility perspective can be seen in many similar summaries: Evans, Corsini & Gazda's "Individual Education" (1990); Glasser's "Control Theory" (1990); Kohn's "Caring Schools" (1991); Lickona's "Educating for Character" (1991); Purkey & Strahan's "Positive Discipline" (1986); and Schaps & Solomon's "Developmental Discipline" (1990). Seldom do the writings on responsibility address the complex contexts of schooling and classrooms (Lickona, 1991, pp. 323-347 and 395-420, presents an exception, although the author does not account for culture, gender or social class as contexts of control and socialization). Discussions of the history and politics of control are rarely broached.

The purpose of classroom management within this perspective is to promote individual behavioral and attitudinal change -- what could be labeled self-discipline. In terms of the practices that lead to responsibility, there is a rejection of overt coercion, with a de-emphasis on struggles over power and competition and a corresponding emphasis on individual choice-making and mutual respect (see examples in Curwin & Mendler, 1988, pp. 102-109). In the responsibility perspective I applaud the emphasis on

engendering students' self-discipline through teachers' caring acts. I also think that throughout this literature on responsibility there seems an uneasy peace between centering on responsibility for oneself (an emphasis that is quite pronounced in Evans, Corsini & Gazda, 1990), and focusing more on group processes and responsibility for others (especially Kohn, 1991; Schaps & Solomon, 1990; and the numerous practical examples in Lickona, 1991). This is because in many cases there are really two perspectives being discussed: responsibility and solidarity.

In my readings and teaching I am exploring my current beliefs that a teacher's legitimate authority depends on establishing solidarity with students. Solidarity "involves the rapport established through social interaction or the feeling that the interaction is proceeding on the basis of some shared interest" (Bowers & Flinders, 1989, p. 141). Solidarity is enacted through classroom negotiations between teacher and students, and among students. Solidarity is an outcome of negotiation.

Just recently I have tried to examine the contexts, the purposes, the realms, and the limits of teachers' negotiations with students. When teachers set rules and goals, develop curriculum, organize classroom activities, and assess students, how might they confer with students to account for students' and teacher's interests? What are the risks teachers take when they negotiate, and when might they ignore or encourage or unilaterally control students (all non-negotiatory acts)?

All this talk about negotiation is not intended to discount the importance of responsibility. A search for ways to encourage students in taking responsibility for their actions must be coupled with an environment that aims for solidarity. Negotiation does not negate responsibility; in fact, negotiatory acts are doomed unless all parties are responsible for their agreements and actions.

TEACHING ABOUT CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS OF AUTHORITY

Now I have begun to confront my university teaching in two ways. How should I teach about classroom relationships of authority, and about the twin tensions of caring/controlling and individual responsibility/group solidarity? And how should I negotiate with my own students at the university, a crucial testing of my internally persuasive discourses? I teach courses in both graduate curriculum (middle grades and secondary) and elementary social studies. If I am to take negotiation seriously, the enacted syllabi of those courses might differ markedly. I am only now developing the ideas under discussion, so this is not the time to present a half-baked plan. But I will briefly describe one set of ideas about "social compacts" that I am intending to have students grapple with, and I will offer several final remarks about what university educators should keep in mind when addressing issues of classroom relationships.

For my own teaching and research, I am curious about the nature of the *social compact* enacted in classrooms. It seems to me that teachers and students, by trying to ignore, encourage, negotiate or control one another, are continually creating a compact that is both explicit and implicit. It is made explicit through the agreed-upon written rules, procedures, and expectations of achievement in the classroom. An explicit compact is of course open to interpretations; being explicit does not relieve it of the constant demands of meaning-giving. A compact may incorporate a written contract with individual students or even a whole class, but it is more than that. It also represents the tacit understandings, the flexible arrangements that underlie the life of a classroom.

There are five general curricular questions relating to social compacts that I want to ask in my courses:

What is the nature of control and caring? How are caring and controlling enacted in classrooms?

How might teachers determine when to ignore, to encourage, to negotiate, and to unilaterally control in the classroom?

What are the realms of negotiation, and how can we negotiate with students?

What is the relationship of curriculum to the issues of caring and controlling under consideration?

One aspect of a social compact, which will serve as an example of what my preservice or graduate students should consider, concerns efforts to negotiate when conflicts arise between students, or between student and teacher. I will point out key issues that will be part of the content of my courses.

I first want education students to learn about conflict resolution. This term refers to a wide range of formal negotiatory processes which are being enacted in scores of schools. Lickona (1991) provides examples of how teachers use "class meetings" to discuss classroom problems (pp. 143-147) and depicts several programs and information sources (286-299). I would want students to engage in class meetings within my course, to simulate them and also to address the problems and promises of such an approach.

In addition to the teacher-directed approaches above, peer mediation has shown promise. The "Dispute Management in the Schools" project involved a cooperative venture between a university and school district (Araki & Takeshita, 1991). Johnson and Johnson (1992), two prominent cooperative learning experts, are now examining the effects of peer mediation, so more information can be expected in the near future. Perhaps in a university course we could role-play a peer mediation session, and also invite a local group of students and teachers who are working with peer mediation.

I would not want to ignore issues of gender, social status, and ethnic group. Shook's descriptions of "ho'oponopono" (1985), a traditional Hawai'ian family problem-solving process, point to the cultural assumptions in mediation practices. We would want to consider the cultural and political assumptions of teacher- or peer-directed mediation.

In addition to rules and disputes, class goals can also be negotiated. Lickona (1991) speaks briefly of how some teachers have expanded students' roles in decision-making, which includes setting goals for the class. Certainly in a teacher education course goal-setting could be negotiated. I would want the students and myself to think and read about the nature of teachers' and students' goals, and to consider how the sometimes-conflicting goals might be negotiated. Practicing teachers could then take practical action to determine what their students' goals are, and to experiment with negotiating goals.

CONCLUSION

The emphasis on negotiation throughout this last section should not deny the need for routines of action in teaching. As teacher educators and teachers we always have to weigh the uncertainties of negotiation against the securities of unilateral control or reward/consequence systems. However we perceive that balance, the social compact in our classrooms is being recreated every day, and control is much more complex than any one model can handle. We must conceive of classrooms not as places to manage or control, but as places where we enact a social compact with students that is in a constant state of revision. This social compact is underwritten by the actions of caring and controlling -- the ways in which power is expressed. I cannot forget who I was, as a student teacher and as a graduate student. I was always trying make sense of how I could care for my students in curricular and personal ways, and since graduate school I have struggled to understand the many discourses about power and control. We are all, as educators, ethically obliged to analyze our actions and beliefs and to challenge our students to examine theirs.

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